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ABSTRACT

Getting students to read can often be a very exasperating, frustrating experience for classroom teachers, parents, and reading specialists alike. However, the use of jokes, cartoons, funny stories, comedy records, and joke books can be used to instill a love of reading. Humor can also be used to improve interpersonal skills, and reading and writing skills. (Included are names and addresses of people and organizations that provide humorous material.) (RS)

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TEACHING READING THROUGH HUMOR

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ABSTRACT

THIS PAPER REVIEWS THE USE OF HUMOR, FUN, MIRTH, BUFFOONERY, AND FRIVOLITY IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF READING. MANY STUDENTS DO NOT LIKE READING AS THEY FIND IT OF NO INTRINSIC ENJOYMENT. THIS PAPER SHOWS HOW THE USE OF JOKES, CARTOONS, FUNNY STORIES, COMEDY RECORDS, AND JOKE BOOKS CAN BE USED TO INSTILL A LOVE OF READING. ALSO, GENERALIZATION FROM JOKES TO ACTUAL BOOKS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE USE OF HUMOR, AND JUDICIOUS TEACHER ASSISTANCE.

GETTING STUDENTS TO READ CAN OFTEN BE A VERY EXASPERATING, FRUSTRATING EXPERIENCE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND READING SPECIALISTS ALIKE. THIS PAPER WILL SHOW HOW TO USE LAUGHTER, MIRTH, SATIRE, HUMOR, AND THE POWER OF PLAY TO GET STUDENTS READING AND KEEP THEM READING FOR FUN AND ENJOYMENT.

EVEN STUDENTS WHO HAVE MINIMAL READING SKILLS CAN ENJOY CARTOONS FROM THE NEWSPAPERS- FROM COMICS, FROM THE EDITORIAL PAGES AND FROM THE SUNDAY NEWSPAPER.
EVERY DAY, TEACHERS CAN POST A DIFFERENT CARTOON FOR STUDENTS TO ENJOY OR USE IT TO OPEN UP THEIR CLASSROOM LECTURE WITH AN APPROPRIATE JOKE. JOKES ARE EASY TO RELATE TO, AND IN GENERAL, ARE WRITTEN AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL FOR STUDENTS TO READ. IN ORDER TO GET YOU STARTED, THE AUTHORS HAVE COMPILED A BATCH OF 100 CARTOONS FOUND TO BE FUNNY BY ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS (50 FOR EACH GROUP) . THESE ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU BEGIN YOUR HUMOR-US READING PROGRAM FROM THE AUTHORS FOR XEROXING COSTS ONLY !

JOKES CAN BE USED TO ENHANCE INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS. STUDENTS CAN BRING JOKES TO SHARE WITH THEIR FRIENDS AND THE CLASS. TEACHERS CAN READ ALOUD JOKES THAT STUDENTS CONSIDER MOST FUNNY. EDITORIAL CARTOONS CAN ALSO BE USED TO EXPLAIN CURRENT EVENTS. STUDENTS CAN " RAID " JOKE BOOKS AND SUBMIT WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THE " FUNNIEST " JOKES. THIS FORCES THEM TO READ, AND READING FOR HUMOR CAN ENHANCE THEIR PLEASURE IN READING. INDEX CARDS CAN BE USED SO THAT

STUDENTS CAN DEVELOP AN INDEX OF JOKES FROM VARIOUS PEOPLE. MANY BOOK COMPANIES SELL " JOKE BOOKS " BY VARIOUS COMEDIANS FOR EXAMPLE, PRICE/STERN/SLOAN HAS A NUMBER OF JOKE BOOKS PROBABLY WRITTEN AT ABOUT A THIRD OR FOURTH GRADE LEVEL. THESE JOKE BOOKS INCLUDE :

1) THE WORLD'S WORST MORON JOKES (SLOAN, 1975)
2) THE WORLD'S WORST MONSTER JOKES (PRICE, STERN, SLOAN, 1973)
3) THE WORLD'S WORST JOKES (PRICE, STERN, SLOAN, 1969)
4) THE WORLD'S WORST ELEPHANT JOKES (PRICE, STERN, SLOAN, 1963)
5) THE WORLD'S WORST KNOCK KNOCK JOKES (SLOAN, STERN, AND SLOAN, 1974)
6) ELEPHANTS, GRAPES AND PICKLES (PRICE, STERN AND SLOAN, 1964)

THESE BOOKS ARE WELL ILLUSTRATED, ARE SMALL, INEXPENSIVE, AND ENJOYABLE. THEY ARE IDEAL FOR STARTING YOUR HUMOR-US READING PROJECT (WHICH IS NOW SWEEPING THE NATION DUE TO THE EFFORTS OF DR. NILE STANLEY (SELF PROCLAIMED AS THE FUNNIEST MAN ALIVE !). THIS PROJECT WILL CERTAINLY CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED READING IN YOUR CLASSROOM IN ADDITION, THE CLASSIC TOME " I DON'T GET NO RESPECT " FEATURING RODNEY DANGERFIELD IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM PRICE, STERN AND SLOAN . (FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES, KIDS OR TEACHERS CAN SEND A STAMPED, SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE TO : PRICE/STERN/SLOAN, PUBLISHERS, INC 410 NORTH LA CIENEGA BLVD. LOS ANGELES, CA 90048)

ANOTHER RELATIVELY SIMPLE, EASY WAY TO GET STUDENTS READING AND LAUGHING AT JOKES IS TO HAVE STUDENTS BRING IN HUMOROUS CARDS THAT ARE OFTEN SENT THROUGH THE MAIL FOR BIRTHDAYS, HOLIDAYS AND OTHER MEMORABLE OCCASIONS.

A SPECIFIC PART OF THE BULLETIN BOARD CAN HOLD CARDS THAT STUDENTS HAVE BROUGHT IN OR CARDS THAT HAVE BEEN SENT TO THEM BY OTHERS.

FOR TEACHERS WHO LIKE TO USE PROPS, ARCHIE MC PHEE AND COMPANY HAS AN ENTIRE CATALOG DEVOTED TO HUMOROUS ITEMS, TOYS, GIMMICKS AND PROPS (JUST WRITE TO ARCHIE MC PHEE, P.O. BOX 30852, SEATTLE, WA 98103)

IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE WRITING AND LISTENING SKILLS, STUDENTS CAN LISTEN TO RECORDINGS OF VARIOUS ARTISTS SUCH AS RODNEY DANGERFIELD (WHO HAS TWO ALBUMS TO HIS CREDIT) AND WRITE DOWN THEIR FAVORITE JOKE ON AN INDEX CARD TO SHARE WITH THEIR CLASSMATES OR TEACHERS. BILL COSBY HAS SEVERAL RECORDS AND STUDENTS CAN, IF THEY ARE SO INCLINED, TRY TO READ SOME OF COSBY'S BOOKS.(HIS BOOK ON FATHERHOOD IS GOOD PREPARATION FOR KIDS THINKING OF BECOMING PARENTS AND " TIME FLIES " GIVES KIDS A PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE). HERE THE TEACHER'S SKILL AND ACUMEN ARE IMPERATIVE. THEY MUST ASCERTAIN IF THE BOOK IS WRITTEN AT THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL OR ABOVE THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL OR EVEN IF IT IS AT THEIR FRUSTRATIONAL LEVEL. (STANLEY, 1988)

JOKE BOOKS MAY EITHER BE THE NEXT STEP IN YOUR HUMOROUS READING PROGRAM, OR FOR ADVANCED READERS, THEY MAY BY PASS THE PRICE/SLOAN AND STERN SMALL ILLUSTRATED BOOKS AND PROCURE PAPERBACK JOKE BOOKS FROM USED BOOK STORES OR THE LOCAL LIBRARY. SOME JOKE BOOKS SADLY CONTAIN LEWD MATERIALS SO TEACHERS MUST BE CAREFUL TO HAVE A LIST OF APPROVED

HUMOROUS MATERIALS. HOWEVER, ERMA BOMBECK BOOKS ARE USUALLY LIGHT, AND DEAL WITH THE COMMON DAY TO DAY PROBLEMS FACED BY PARENTS (AND CHILDREN) .

TEACHERS CAN OBVIOUSLY USE JOKES PERIODICLLY BUT SHOULD BE JUDICIOUS IN THE AMOUNT OF JOKES. THEY CAN BE USED TO IMPROVE THE CLIMATE OR ATMOSPHERE OF THE CLASSROOM BUT THE TEACHERS MUST NOT BECOME A " STAND UP COMIC ".

HISTORICALLY, MANY STUDENTS MAY BE INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMOR. ONCE THE PROGRAM IS OFF THE GROUND, STUDENTS MAY WANT TO PROCURE RECORDS OF SOME OF THE MOST FAMOUS COMEDIANS OF ALL TIME SUCH AS " ABBOTT AND COSTELLO " (WHOSE SKIT " WHO'S ON FIRST " IS ONE OF THE ALL TIME GREATS !) LAUREL AND HARDY (STILL SEEN ON T.V.) AND BURNS AND ALLEN . IN ADDITION, HENNY YOUNGMAN HAS A BOOK OF 500 ONE LINERS (ACTUALLY THERE ARE 497 OF THEM, STANLEY COUNTED THEM !)

BOOK REPORTS ON FAMOUS COMEDIANS CAN INCLUDE THE GREATS OF VAUDEVILLE AND INCLUDE FUNNY PEOPLE OF TODAY. A PARTIAL LIST WOULD INCLUDE : JACK BENNY, THE MARX BROTHERS, (WRITE TO THE FREEDONIA GAZETTE, DARIEN 28, NEW HOPE, PA 18938 FOR A BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER DEVOTED TO HARPO, CHICO, GROUCHO, ZIPPO) SMOTHERS BROTHERS, W.C. FIELDS, LENNY BRUCE, ANDREW DICE CLAY (IF YOU LIKE HIS BRAND OF " HUMOR ") JONATHAN WINTERS, REDD FOXX, RICH LITTLE (AND POLITICAL HUMOR- WHICH YOUNGER KIDS MAY NOT UNDERSTAND) THE THREE STOOGES (A REPORT ON SLAPSTICK AND THE KEYSTONE COPS) CAROL BURNETT, LILY TOMLIN, GILDA RADNER (IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING) AND ART

BUCHWALD FOR OLDER STUDENTS) . STUDENTS CAN BEGIN TO WRITE COMPARISONS ABOUT ARCHIE BUNKER AND EDDIE MURPHY.

MOVIES FEATURING ROBIN WILLIAMS ARE CURRENTLY IN VOGUE. ONE IS ABOUT VIET NAM (GOOD MORNING VIETNAM) AND ONE OTHER IS ABOUT EDUCATION (DEAD POET'S SOCIETY) WHILE STILL ANOTHER CONCERNS NEUROLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY (AWAKENINGS). EACH OF THESE MOVIES CAN BE USED TO TEACH SOMETHING (ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CLASS AND PHYSIOLOGY RESPECTIVELY). INSTEAD OF BOOK REPORTS, TEACHERS CAN EMPLOY MOVIE REPORTS AND HOPEFULLY ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO READ THE BOOK UPON WHICH THE MOVIE WAS BASED.

A GREAT SOURCE OF MATERIALS IS FOUND FROM THE HUMOR PROJECT (CATALOG AVAILABLE FROM 110 SPRING STREET, SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK, 12866) FOR YOUNGER READERS, WE HAVE BOOKS LIKE " THE BEST OF BEETLE BAILEY" ," THE BEST OF HI AND LOIS" AND OF COURSE, " ZIGGY'S STAR PERFORMANCES" AND WILLIAM KELLY'S BOOK ON " LAUGHTER AND LEARNING - HUMOR IN THE CLASSROOM " WILL SERVE AS A SOURCE TO INCORPORATE HUMOR INTO OTHER CLASSES AND GET STUDENTS MOTIVATED AND READING.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PAPERBACK BOOKS THAT MAY REALLY GET YOUR READING PROGRAM GOING- LARRY WILDE IS ONE WILD AND CRAZY GUY WHO HAS WRITTEN THE FOLLOWING BOOKS THAT ARE AVAILABLE FROM PINNACLE BOOK SERVICES (P.O. BOX 690 IN NEW YORK CITY- 10019).

1) THE OFFICIAL POLISH/ITALIAN JOKE BOOK
2) THE OFFICIAL JEWISH/IRISH JOKE BOOK
3) THE OFFICIAL VIRGINS/SEX MANIACS JOKE BOOK
4) THE OFFICIAL BLACK FOLKS/WHITE FOLKS JOKE BOOK
5) MORE- THE OFFICIAL POLISH/ITALIAN JOKE BOOK
6) MORE- THE OFFICIAL JEWISH/IRISH JOKE BOOK
7) THE OFFICIAL DEMOCRAT/REPUBLICAN JOKE BOOK
8) THE OFFICIAL RELIGIOUS/NOT SO RELIGIOUS JOKE BOOK
9) THE OFFICIAL SMART KIDS/DUMB PARENTS JOKE BOOK
10) THE OFFICIAL GOLFERS JOKE BOOK
11) THE LAST OFFICIAL POLISH JOKE BOOK
12) THE OFFICIAL DIRTY JOKE BOOK
13) THE OFFICIAL CAT LOVERS/DOG LOVERS JOKE BOOK
14) THE LAST OFFICIAL ITALIAN JOKE BOOK
15) THE OFFICIAL BOOK OF SICK JOKES

SOME OF THESE BOOKS CAN OBVIOUSLY BE PROCURED THROUGH THE MAIL AND OTHERS THROUGH BOOKSTORES.

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, LARRY WILDE HAS THE FOLLOWING BOOKS PUBLISHED BY OTHER COMPANIES- THE COMPLETE BOOK OF ETHNIC HUMOR (CORWIN BOOKS) HOW THE GREAT COMEDY WRITERS CREATE LAUGHTER (NELSON-HALL) AND THE GREAT COMEDIANS (CITADEL PRESS)

AND GET THIS- THE " NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS" ACTUALLY HAS A BOOK ON MATHEMATICS AND HUMOR. HARD TO BELIEVE !

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF " CULT " HUMORISTS OR LESS WELL KNOWN HUMORISTS SUCH AS BENNY HILL AND MONTY PYTHON. STUDENTS MAY OR MAY NOT RELATES TO THESE BRITISH HUMORISTS AND MAY EVEN FAIL TO " GET THE POINT " OF SOME OF THE HUMOR (SPAM, SPAM AND EGGS, SPAM AND BACON, SPAM AND OATMEAL, SPAM AND TOAST, SPAM AND JUICE, SPAM AND GRAPEFRUIT ETC) VARIOUS TELEVISION SHOWS ABOUND REGARDING HUMOR AND TEACHERS CAN RELY ON THEIR OWN CREATIVITY TO EXPLOIT THOSE SHOWS FOR

EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES. ASSIGNMENTS CAN BE WRITTEN, CLASS PROJECTS OR GROUP WORK.

FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS " GUIDING YOUNG AUTHORS TO WRITE HUMOR" BY NINA CROSBY AND ELIZABETH MARTEN IS AVAILABLE AS ARE THE FOLLOWING BOOKS IN BOOKSTORES, LIBRARIES OR FROM THE HUMOR PROJECT.

FOR SCIENCE TEACHERS " A TREASURY OF SCIENCE JOKES " BY MORRIS GORAN.

FOR ART TEACHERS " CARTOONING FOR KIDS WHO DRAW AND FOR KIDS WHO DON'T DRAW " BY VAL CHEATHAM.

FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING TEACHERS " USING HUMOR FOR EFFECTIVE BUSINESS SPEAKING BY GENE PERRET.

FOR ALL TEACHERS COMES AN AUDIO- CASSETTE - " IT'S LAUGHADEMIC : MIRTH PROVOKING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM AND REAL LIFE TOO BY JOYCE ANISMAN-SALTMAN AND KOPI SALTMAN.

THERE IS ALSO A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION ENTITLED THE HUMOR, HYNOSIS AND HEALTH QUARTERLY. (OR THE HA-HA-HA HANDOUT !) CHUCK DURHAM WILL SEND YOU A COPY IF YOU WRITE TO HIM AT : P.O. BOX 15462 LONG BEACH, CA 90815 (TELL HIM MIKE SENT YOU)

ANOTHER SOURCE OF JOKES, LAUGHS AND HUMOR IS THE GUFFAW GUIDE, THE MIRTH MANAGER AND HUMOR HELPER " LAUGHTER WORKS- THE NEWSLETTER ". THERE IS A " LAUGHTER WORKS WAREHOUSE " WHICH HAS BOOKS, TAPES, VIDEOS AND GIFTS DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE POSITIVE POWER OF HUMOR. (LOCATED AT 222 SELBY RANCH

ROAD, SUITE 4 IN SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95864)

ANOTHER SOURCE IS " THE LAUGHING HEART " THIS IS A FIRST CLASS NEWSLETTER THAT IS FREE, FUNNY AND FUNKY " WRITE FOR YOUR FREE COPY TO P.O. BOX 5165 LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40205

STEVE WILSON, A REAL NEAT GUY WILL SEND YOU HIS REPORT ON LIFE AND HUMOR- WRITE TO HIM AT 3400 N. HIGH ST # 120 COLUMBUS, OHIO 43202

THE " FREE SPIRIT " HAS SOME ASPECTS OF HUMOR AND CAN BE PROCURED FROM " 400 FIRST AVE. NORTH 616 MINNEAPOLIS 55401

FOR THOSE GIRLS AND GUYS WANTING TO GO INTO NURSING THERE IS A JOURNAL OF NURSING JOCULARITY. THIS IS AVAILABLE FROM P.O. BOX 40416, MESA, ARIZONA 85274. THIS IS A GREAT JOURNAL ABOUT HOSPITALS, MEDICINE AND NURSING.

FOR THOSE INTO RELIGION, THE JOYFUL NOISELETTER IS PUBLISHED BY THE FELLOWSHIP OF MERRY CHRISTIANS (WRITE TO THEM AT THE P.O. BOX 668, KALAMAZOO, MI 49005-0668)

HAVING STUDENTS WRITE OR WORD PROCESS TO THE ABOVE SOURCES FOR HUMOROUS MATERIALS CAN ENHANCE THEIR WRITING SKILLS.

THERE ARE A GREAT NUMBER OF " TABLOIDS " AS THEY ARE CALLED, WHICH ALSO PROVIDE LUDICROUS EXAMPLES OF INANE " NEWS ". FOR EXAMPLE, THE " WEEKLY WORLD NEWS " HAS ARTICLES SUCH AS " HUGE SNAKE EATS MAN ALIVE " " ISLAND

TRIBE WORSHIPS CLARK CABLE AS A GOD ! " AND OF COURSE, " I CAME FACE TO FACE WITH BIGFOOT ! " OFTEN THESE ARTICLES CAN BE USED TO TEACH CRITICAL THINKING- JUST BECAUSE IT IS IN PRINT DOES' NT ALWAYS MEAN IT IS TRUE.

GRANTED, THESE TABLOIDS ARE LUDICROUS, BIZARRE, AND JUST IDIOTIC- BUT IF IT CAN GET KIDS READING, SOME BENEFIT MAY RESULT.

SOME STUDENTS MAY HAVE GARY LARSONITIS- AN PECULIAR LIKING FOR " THE FAR SIDE " CARTOONS . THERE IS AN ENTIRE " FAR SIDE SERIES " INCLUDING

THE FAR SIDE
BEYOND THE FAR SIDE
IN SEARCH OF THE FAR SIDE
BRIDE OF THE FAR SIDE
VALLEY OF THE FAR SIDE
IT CAME FROM THE FAR SIDE
HOUND OF THE FAR SIDE
THE FAR SIDE OBSERVER
NIGHT OF THE CRASH TEST DUMMIES
WIDELIFE PRESERVES
THE PREHISTORY OF THE FAR SIDE

THE FAR SIDE GALLERY
THE FAR SIDE GALLERY 2
THE FAR SIDE GALLERY 3

THESE GARY LARSON BOOKS ARE OFTEN BIZARRE, STRANGE, GROSS, IDIOTIC, SOMETIMES UN UNDERSTANDABLE (IS THERE SUCH A WORD ?) AND FAR AFIELD. BUT STUDENTS CAN COMPARE TYPES OF HUMOR FOUND IN THEIR DAILY NEWSPAPERS.

STUDENTS CAN ALSO ATTEMPT TO CONCOCT THEIR OWN CARTOONS IMITATING GARY LARSEN AND OTHERS.

FOR VERY ADVANCED READERS WHO ENJOY SATIRE, THERE IS A THING CALLED THE " JOURNAL OF POLYMORPHOUS PERVERSITY "

SOUNDS STRANGE AND BIZARRE, BUT IT IS MERELY A SPOOF, A SATIRE ON PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PSYCHIARIC REALM. THERE ARE TWO ENTIRE BOOKS PUBLISHED AS A RESULT OF THIS JOURNAL- THE PRIMAL WHIMPER(1989) AND ORAL SADISM AND THE VEGETARIAN PERSONALITY (1986). (WRITE TO GLENN ELLENBOGEN AT WRY BRED PRESS P.O. BOX 1454, MADISON SQUARE STATION, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10159) HE WILL SEND SOME INTERESTING THINGS TO YOU.

IT WAS SIGMUND FREUD WHO SAID THAT DREAMS WERE THE ROYAL ROAD TO THE UNCONSCIOUS. WE SAY THAT HUMOR IS THE ROYAL ROAD TO READING WELL.

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